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Printed by Express Printers, London, E.1.

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ANARCHY 39

Discovering Homer Lane	John Ellerby	129
The legacy of Homer Lane	David Wills	135
Recollecting Homer Lane	A. S. Neill	144
The Little Commonwealth in time	Anthony Weaver	147
The Homer Lane Society	Roy Frye	151
Not quite the right idea	Leila Berg	153
Chessman's bequest to his executioners	Richard Drinnon	158
Cover by	Sheila Beskine	

Other issues of ANARCHY

VOLUME 1, 1961: 1. Sex-and-Violence, Galbraith*; 2. Worker's control*; 3. What does anarchism mean today?; 4. Deinstitutionalisation; 5. Spain 1936*; 6. Cinema†; 7. Adventure playgrounds*; 8. Anthropology; 9. Prison; 10. MacInnes, Industrial decentralisation.
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 VOLUME 3, 1963: 23. Housing, squatters, do-it-yourself; 24. Community of Scholars; 25. Technology, cybernetics; 26. CND, Salesmanship, Thoreau; 27. Youth; 28. The future of anarchism; 29. The Spies for Peace Story; 30. The community workshop; 31. Self-organising systems, Beatniks; the State; 32. Crime; 33. Alex Comfort's anarchism†; 34. Science fiction, Workless teens.
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Lawrence, Blake and Homer Lane, once healers in our English land;

These are dead as iron for ever; these can never hold our hand.
 Lawrence was brought down by smut-hounds, Blake went dotty as he sang,

Homer Lane was killed in action by the Twickenham Baptist gang.

—W. H. AUDEN: Poems 1930.

Discovering Homer Lane

HOMER LANE WAS A PIONEER in the non-punitive treatment of delinquency and of freedom in education, whose life was, from one point of view a series of humiliations, but whose influence has been fruitful in both these spheres. After his death his friends produced two books on his work, both published in 1928, *Talks to Parents and Teachers*, put together from notes of Lane's lectures, and *Homer Lane and the Little Commonwealth* by E. T. Bazeley, a training college principal who had worked with him there. These two books found their way on to students' reading lists, and Miss Bazeley's was reprinted in 1948 while *Talks to Parents and Teachers* (Allen & Unwin 8s 6d) has been reprinted many times. Two men above all, through their own work and writing have kept Lane's name alive: his most influential and best-loved disciples, A. S. Neill and David Wills.

Wills so often remarked "What a pity no-one has written a life of Homer Lane," that in the end his wife answered "You'd better write it yourself", and over the years they collected the material for a biography not a small undertaking for people with limited resources and an exacting occupation, especially when it involved a journey to the scenes of Lane's early activities in America. The book has at last appeared*, too late, unhappily, for Ruth Wills to share the author's and the readers' pleasure at seeing it in print. David Wills has given us an utterly candid account of Lane's life: there is not the slightest attempt to put his hero on a pedestal; where he is speculating he tells us so, and where he has an embarrassing truth to tell, he tells it, with the result that we are left with an enhanced respect for both subject and author.

* *Homer Lane: a Biography*, by W. David Wills (Allen and Unwin, 40s.).



Homer Lane was born in a small New England town in 1875, the second son of a large chapel-going family. After leaving school he had a variety of errand-boy jobs and at 19 became a grocer's assistant at Southborough, Mass., where he later married the police chief's daughter. A local physician and school board member Dr. Claude Jones was an enthusiast for the Sloyd Movement (Sloyd is a Finnish word for skill, and it was this movement that introduced manual training into the school curricula). Jones wanted to run a voluntary Sloyd class to persuade his fellow managers to adopt the method and offered to finance Lane's training as a teacher. So Lane commuted daily to a Sloyd Training School at Boston, at the same time running the voluntary evening classes, which were a great success, but suddenly, soon after the birth of their second child, Lane's wife died of pneumonia. In the following summer he graduated from the training school and took a vacation job teaching woodwork in the Pennsylvania State Reformatory. It was here, Dr. Jones later told Lane's son, "where he first learned that the reform school made the bad boy worse." In the autumn of 1901 Sloyd classes were started at Southborough, but by the end of the school year the conservative element on the school board succeeded in getting them discontinued as an economy measure. Lane then obtained a job as a Sloyd teacher a thousand miles away in Detroit, where he was later joined by his son and his first wife's sister whom he subsequently married. After a few years he became Superintendent of Playgrounds, in which job "his method was to allow the children the maximum of freedom to play their own games, and in watching them, he learned much about spontaneous childish behaviour that was later to be of great use to him." Or as Lane himself was to put it later, "A study of the causes of juvenile delinquency with reference to opportunities for free play led me to the conclusion that by far the greater proportion of juvenile crimes are merely a form of play."

In Detroit Lane gained the reputation of an ebullient and sparkling speaker, but, says Wills, "he would allow himself to be so carried away by his argument that any 'fact' that would support it would become—for him—a real fact, and would be passed on as if it were the solemn truth." This characteristic was to bring him endless trouble, the first example of which happened in Detroit:

He was "carrying on" in his "anarchistic" way about the problem of the unmarried mother, and defending the practice of abortion . . . "Why," he said, "I have myself borne the expense of an abortion in this city of Detroit, rather than see another child enter the world condemned to all the sufferings and odium of illegitimacy."

How much truth there was in this assertion it is impossible to say; the very great possibility is that there was none whatever. It was merely his way of saying that he felt so strongly on this subject that if he knew of any girl who had got into this kind of trouble he would be willing to act in that way. It is not so very dishonest—in the heat of an argument—to say one has done what one is perfectly willing to do, and it is so very much more convincing!

But the story found its way to a newspaper man who told Lane that the City Fathers would not like to hear what kind of man was running their playgrounds. Lane meekly took the hint and resigned. Now

while teaching in Detroit he had become friendly with a young lawyer, Fred Butzell, among whose interests was the Hannah Schloss Memorial Building, a Jewish settlement house, where Lane was invited to hold manual training classes. "From the first he took a very broad view of the scope of the proposed classes. Indeed, he did not organise them as classes at all but as a club—and a self-governing club. He told Butzell he was most anxious to experiment in self-government which he was not allowed to do at school during the day." Lane's success at the Hannah Schloss led Butzell to seek his advice about another activity, the Boys' Home, a kind of probation hostel for school-age boys. Lane's view was "Shift the whole thing out into the country. Take the kids right away from the environment that's made them what they are. Let them get some fresh air and some wholesome outdoor work. Let them create a new environment for themselves." Butzell persuaded the Committee of Management to agree and they bought a farm outside the city. In March 1907, Lane, now 32 with his wife and three of his four children together with twenty boys moved out to start the new home which was called the Ford Republic (not after the motor maker).

It was superficially similar to another famous experiment started a few years earlier by William George, the Junior Republic at Freeville, New York. George's rather naive concept of the self-governing institution was a kind of miniature United States constitution, with an elected legislature, a judge, public prosecutor, police force and President together with an economic structure of "free enterprise". Lane's notion was different. As Howard Jones says, describing the Little Commonwealth in *Reluctant Rebels*:

Lane did not believe in systems, even "freedom" systems. "Freedom," he said, "cannot be given. It is taken by the child in discovery and inventions." True to this principle he refused to impose upon the children a system of government copied from the institutions of the adult world. The self-governing structure of the Little Commonwealth was evolved by the children themselves, slowly and painfully and to satisfy their own needs.

However the Ford Republic certainly had more in common with the George Junior Republic than with the Little Commonwealth, and when David Wills visited the place in 1947 he was astonished to find it run in exactly the same way as when Lane was there forty years earlier. "I mention this," says Wills in another of his books, "only to deprecate it. An essential element of shared responsibility, it seems to me, is that its forms must be devised by the living community, and clearly be seen to have been devised by it." In spite of rows with the committee and a continual financial muddle, the Ford Republic was an obvious and acclaimed success, until one morning a Committee member chanced to see Lane and a young woman teacher from the Republic coming out of a house in Detroit. He was asked to explain this at a Committee meeting:

He loved her. There was never any doubt about that, and no man in love can be ashamed of his feelings, so why should he deny it or attempt to explain it away? He did neither, and to the Committee he seemed simply brazen, talking a lot of Shelley and clap-trap about a *ménage-à-trois*. It might be good enough for William Godwin and nineteenth century Naples, but for God's own country in the twentieth century it simply would not do.

Once more he resigned, and this time got a job with a construction firm at Buffalo. (David Wills' speculations about the importance of this period are included in this issue of *ANARCHY*). A year later, in 1913, Lane came to England at the invitation of George Montagu, later ninth Earl of Sandwich, who had visited the Ford Republic and reported full of enthusiasm to a committee of wealthy and influential people interested in penal reform who were anxious to start a self-governing colony for delinquents. Impressed by Lane, they asked him to stay and run their Little Commonwealth in Dorset. This was in May 1913, and the first "citizens" were admitted to the Commonwealth less than two months later.

The success of Lane's methods there soon became evident. By the following year it was being approvingly described in the *Times Educational Supplement*, and Lane was addressing the Howard League. "It was in the summer of that year, however, that the movement started which was to carry Lane's name throughout English educational circles. In July an informal but enthusiastic conference about New Ideals in Education was held at East Runton, on the Norfolk Coast, as a result of which a small committee was set up with the duty of arranging an annual conference on the same subject." Recognition by the Home Office (which was needed to enable local authorities to spend public money on the support of children sent to the Commonwealth) was not given until March 1917. As Wills says, in view of his own experience.

It is highly improbable that the Home Office would recognise such a place as the Little Commonwealth even today, when many of Lane's ideas are common currency, and the Home Office is, so to speak, fifty years more enlightened than it was then . . . How then does it come about that a seasoned inspector of this cautious Government Department fifty years ago, in spite of all the muddle and confusion, the lack of order and routine, the absence of a normal discipline and the presence of both sexes at the riskiest age—why, in spite of all this, was Russell prepared to recommend approval?

He finds the answer partly in Lane's charm and persuasiveness and partly in the character of Charles Russell, a very unusual man who came relatively late in life to the Home Office staff. Unfortunately he died soon after recognition was given.

The story of the Little Commonwealth has been told in Miss Bazeley's book, and her readers will be familiar with the events leading to its end. Two of the girls, in the course of a dispute there, alleged that Lane had been sleeping with them. The affair died down, but at the end of 1917 the girls absconded from the Commonwealth, got into trouble with the police and repeated their charges. The Committee made an enquiry and passed a vote of confidence in Lane, the Home Office held an enquiry and in June 1918 withdrew recognition from the Commonwealth. Wills, who gives all the available evidence, believes that the Home Office in fact concluded that Lane was innocent of the charges brought against him, since they had permitted the life of the Commonwealth to go on for six months after the enquiry as usual, with new children being admitted, which they would scarcely have done if Lane was seducing the girls. (There was no case for a trial

since the girls were above the age of consent). He further concludes that "What was really objected to was not Lane's alleged misconduct, but Lane's methods—the whole system by which the place was run. Realising that Lane and the system were inseparable, the Home Office insisted on his removal, after which there were to be 'certain modifications in the arrangements and methods', to be indicated by Norris", (who was Russell's unsympathetic successor.)

Lane stayed at the Commonwealth to see to the dispersal of the children—the Home Office accepting his recommendations—and in October 1918 moved to London with his family and two of the small children and four of the citizens for whom he had not been able to make satisfactory arrangements. (As Wills points out, if the Home Office had really believed the charges against him they would scarcely have countenanced this: as he was an alien nothing could have been simpler than to have withdrawn his residence permit.)

So here is this man—and his wife: for the large heart of Homer, which could find a home for all the world, would have been useless now without the equally large heart, and willing, capable arms of Mabel—here is this man, with four children of his own whose ages ranged from eleven to nineteen; with a total capital that could not have exceeded £200, no income and an uncertain future; providing a home in a rented furnished house for six children who had no legal claim on him. Here his virtue of open-handed generosity goes hand in hand with its defect of reckless extravagance.

He set up in London as a "lecturer and consultant in psycho-analysis". As an untrained layman he was careful never to refer to his 'patients', they were called 'pupils'. They came to him on the recommendation of the well-connected patrons of the Little Commonwealth. There is ample evidence that these pupils derived great benefit from their sessions with Lane, but it was through one of them that his final disaster came. She was a fairly well-off and highly neurotic woman who spent most of her subsequent life in mental hospitals, and who had made him gifts of large sums of money. Her anxious father complained to the Home Office that his daughter was in the clutches of an undesirable alien. In March 1925 Lane was arrested and charged with "failing to register as required of an alien". In spite of the testimony of many prominent people he was awarded a month's imprisonment and a recommendation for deportation. An appeal was lodged, with "battalions of defence witnesses" in court, when suddenly the appeal was dropped. "Lane had in effect made a bargain with the Court, through his counsel: 'Drop the deportation order and the imprisonment, and I'll leave the country voluntarily.'" He died in Paris a few months later.

Miss Bazeley remarked of Homer Lane that "he had extraordinarily little sense of self-preservation, but an equally extraordinary vitality and recuperative power." After the final disaster, he lost this resilience. David Wills' interpretation of Lane's inability to defend himself, as well as an assessment of his character and achievements are printed in this issue of *ANARCHY*.

There are many other extraordinary things about Lane. One concerns his use of psycho-analytical techniques. Some people have suggested that Lane's downfall at the Commonwealth was due to his analysing the citizens. But Wills establishes that he made no attempts at analysis of individuals until nearly a year after the events and allegations which led to the Home Office enquiry. He prints as an appendix a paper read by Lane to the Committee in 1918 explaining Freudian principles (or rather his version of them) and his difficulties over transference. It is difficult for us to grasp today what a dirty word Freud was in those days, and Wills asks "Where did this uneducated teacher of woodwork pick up his knowledge of psycho-analysis?" especially since at both the Ford Republic and the Little Commonwealth much of his time quite apart from running the places, was spent in building and farming. The likeliest guess it through the writings of G. Stanley Hall and Ernest Jones, but as Wills says, "what is *not* possible is to understand how a man whose days were so full as we have seen Lane's to be, could have found the time and the energy to absorb these difficult, highly technical and revolutionary teachings, with none of that advantage enjoyed by a later generation, of hearing Freudian concepts casually discussed among the hands that rocked their cradles."

Lane's embroiderings of the truth are also interesting in many ways. They are *creative myths*. For instance, he used to tell a story of how he joined a street-corner gang in Detroit and, having got himself respected by its members, re-directed its activities into socially acceptable channels. As Wills remarks somewhere, he probably made it up, but it is essentially true nevertheless, not only because since Lane's day other people have successfully done just this, but because of the principle it illuminates. Similarly, Dr. David in his introduction to *Talks to Parents and Teachers* tells a story he must have heard from Lane of how, when he worked for the contractors in Buffalo, he was soon put in charge of a section of the work and immediately "abolished all foremen and clocking-on, and established a record for low prices". Probably pure invention, but again it illustrates a principle which has emerged since then in other people's experiments in self-government in industry.

The legacy of Homer Lane

DAVID WILLS

IT MAY WELL BE TRUE THAT TO LIVE IN MANKIND is far more than to live in a name, but that is no reason for forgetting the name. We are all in debt to such a man, and the least that we can do is to remember with gratitude both the name and the man who bore it.

Homer Lane lives in mankind and our debt to him is gradually being forgotten. It is the aim of this book to remember the man—his weakness as well as his strength, his frailties as well as his virtues—and to bring him and his name into proper perspective in the field where he ploughed so well and where now others reap.

This simple, perplexing, humble, vain, wise, foolish, tarnished, innocent, happy and tragic man was half-a-century before his time. Our generation are just beginning to overtake him, and are in danger of rushing blindly past the dim figure of the man who, with such ardour and vision, and through so many vicissitudes, blazed at the beginning of our century the trail they now so confidently follow.

He pioneered first in the field of penology and especially in the treatment of young offenders. "Group Therapy" and "Shared Responsibility" are two phrases which are now cautiously and with a sense of novelty and daring, finding a place in the vocabulary of those who work in this field, and they are being experimented with as if they were an invention of our day. Under other names and without the encouragement of like-minded colleagues, Lane used these methods fifty years ago. It has become commonplace to say that offenders are often people who have been starved in childhood of affection, and that no healing technique can be successful that does not include the provis-

DAVID WILLS (whose work was discussed in ANARCHY 15) has spent many years working with maladjusted children and adolescents, and has described his experience in a series of vivid and valuable books, "The Hawkspur Experiment" (1941), "The Barns Experiment" (1945), "Throw Away Thy Rod" (1960), and "Common Sense About Young Offenders" (1962). We are grateful to him and his publishers, Messrs. George Allen and Unwin, for the opportunity to print these fragments from his new book "Homer Lane: A Biography". The first extract is the introductory chapter, the second reflects on the significance of Lane's period of withdrawal to Buffalo after leaving the Ford Republic, and the final one is a glimpse of the regime at the Little Commonwealth.

ion of the affection hitherto denied. This is precisely what Lane said—and did—at the Little Commonwealth. “They must realise”, he said, “that I am on their side”. If a biographer may be forgiven for talking about himself, it pleases me (and presumably does no one any harm) to think that my own work has not been entirely without value or influence. Miss Bazeley’s book about Lane, and his posthumous collection of papers, *Talks to Parents and Teachers*, were published just at a time when my own ideas were gathering shape and form, and the encouragement I received from these two books was so great that it is pretty safe to assume that without it I should have hesitated—and we all know what happens to those who hesitate. This book is part payment of my debt.

He plunged next into education, and the waters are still agitated by the concentric ripples of his entry. In this he was not quite so lonely a figure in his pioneering as he was in the sphere of delinquency. Others were following the same path—the path of freedom instead of imposed authority, of self-expression instead of a pouring-in of knowledge, of evoking and exploiting the child’s natural sense of wonder and curiosity instead of a repetitious hammering home of dull facts. These ideas, again, are all quite commonplace now, but we owe them as much to Lane as to any one man. True, he was not alone, but he was a loved and respected leader among the *avant garde* of his day. His teachings at this time—whether in the general sphere of education and child nurture or in the more narrow sphere of his work with delinquents, were directed at a general and not a particular audience, and they found enthusiastic acceptance in many diverse quarters. Teachers (and heads) in every kind of school fell under his influence, and passed on his teachings, public schools and private schools, elementary schools and secondary schools—all caught a breath of something new and exciting from this vivid and lovable man. One of his close friends was Mr. J. H. Simpson, who has written of his debt to Lane and of how he tried to apply Lane’s principles, both as form-master in an old public school and as headmaster in a new one.¹

Another early friend and indeed disciple was A. S. Neill. Neill has been much maligned and scoffed at by the ignorant and fearful, and perhaps he is still considered by some to be a wild extremist; but he has had a large and liberating influence on English education. In his book *The Comprehensive School*, Dr. Robin Pedley says:

Neill, more than anyone else, has swung teachers’ opinion in this country from its old reliance on authority and the cane to hesitant recognition that a child’s first need is love, and with love respect for the free growth of his personality; free that is from the arbitrary compulsion of elders, and disciplined instead by social experience . . . Today’s friendliness between

¹ See J. H. Simpson: *An Adventure in Education* (London, Sidgwick and Jackson, 1917), and J. H. Simpson: *Sound Schooling* (London, Faber and Faber, 1936).

pupil and teacher is probably the greatest difference between the classrooms of 1963 and those of 1923. This change owes much to Neill . . .

—and Neill owes much, as he never ceases to say, to Lane, whose pupil he was, and who encouraged him when he first began to use the methods with which his name is associated.

Lane’s third field of pioneering was psychotherapy and this side of his work is more difficult to assess. He did leave a more or less coherent body of ideas about education and the treatment of young offenders, which have added to the sum of human knowledge and—where they have been applied—to human happiness. He left no such body of ideas about psychotherapy, but his work with individuals released hundreds of people from morbid fears, from pathological inhibitions, from physical sickness and from ignorance of their own nature. This had the effect not only of increasing their efficiency and usefulness as social beings; it increased their happiness and enhanced the value of their impact on other people. Bishops, heads of great schools, politicians and peers, even a Viceroy of India sat at his feet and confessed themselves healthier, happier and saner men because of his healing work. Lane’s influence through them on thousands of other people is incalculable. Most of this “second hand” influence is in the nature of things anonymous; but not all of it, for among those so influenced are two particularly articulate men, Christopher Isherwood and W. H. Auden. They, as all their readers know, spent some time as young men in Berlin, where they became intimate with a former pupil and enthusiastic advocate of Lane and his teachings, Dr. John Layard. Layard talked to them about Lane, and they imbibed something of his enthusiasm for the man. Auden acknowledges his debt to Lane in the autobiographical section of his *Letter to Lord Byron*—and we are all Mr. Auden’s debtors.²

It happens then that we know how Lane’s influence has reached us all through the alchemy of one man’s poetry; but there must be thousands of others, less literate and outgoing, in whom he lives not “in a name”, but “in mankind”.

He had a warm, ebullient and attractive personality which few could forget, and a genius for friendship which few could resist. People who had known him—perhaps briefly—fifty or sixty years earlier, remembered him not only with pleasure, but with enthusiasm and delight. Of him the old and much mishandled cliché could properly be used—to know him was to love him. And those who loved him were of all kinds, of all opinions, of all walks of life. He was loved as much by some of the distinguished people who formed the committee of the Little Commonwealth as he was by its inmates; as much by his pupils as by their sponsors and relations. He generated all around him laughter and affection, and few, as Lord Lytton said, could long remain unhappy in his presence.

Yet it is tempting to see in the life of Homer Lane a tragedy in the true classical sense. We in the audience can see the seeds of disaster

² W. H. Auden and Louis McNeice: *Letters from Ireland*. Chapter xii.

that inevitably germinate afresh with each fresh access of good fortune that befalls the protagonist. We know, as he does not, until the end, that his life is an example of the converse of Browning's heroic and optimistic lines—He rises, to fall; he fights better to be, in the end, baffled.

Throughout his life Lane was pressed by two furious urges. They are apparently contradictory, but undoubtedly spring—as opposing pairs of drives so often do—from the same unconscious source. It seems doubtful whether he was himself aware of them. In Freudian terms they may have arisen from too severe super-ego, the result of his seven puritan generations acting upon a highly sensitive constitution. This would account for the need to excel and for the pathological self-punishment. Rebellion against it could account for the attempt to create new moral and religious standards. This is just the tentative guess of the layman; but whatever the source, there is no doubt about the existence of the two contradictory drives.

One was the urge to excel; not merely to excel, but to be the best—to be above all others—to be the only one; to be indeed the protagonist. The only Sloyd teacher in Southborough, Mass., the only man in Detroit who knew how to deal with juvenile delinquency—he expected when he came to England very soon to occupy the same kind of position in relation to delinquency as he had enjoyed in Detroit. In fact, workers in that sphere were somewhat resistant; but what matter? He was taken up by the advance guard of the education movement and had become a leading if not yet the leading figure when the collapse of the Little Commonwealth moved him into another sphere—the sphere of psychotherapy. Here he met an opposition which his fears—and his need to feel persecuted—greatly exaggerated. The world of education is a liberal, generous world with vaguely defined boundaries which almost any man of good will can enter. The world of medicine is a tightly closed and conservative corporation. When Lane took up the profession of healing he immediately adopted an antagonistic, aggressive attitude to those he felt were going to be his enemies. He challenged them not only by belittling them; he flaunted before them conduct contrary to their canons and, as it were, dared them to do their worst. They responded in the most humiliating possible way—they ignored him.

The very contempt of the medical profession was a spur to greater effort. He began to formulate an attitude to health and sickness and to human behaviour in general which transcended the sphere of medicine and embraced the whole of life and conduct. In formulating his philosophy of life he began to see himself as the one true interpreter of God's will on earth, the only man who really understood the message of Jesus Christ. From that somewhat presumptuous position it is only one short step to a position that cannot be regarded as rational. It is my view that he was in danger of taking that fatal irrational step when his final disaster befell him—if indeed he had not already taken it.

Just as his whole life was a constant heaving of himself into the

foremost position, so it was also the reverse. Every disaster that overtook him—and we shall see how they followed one another in an ascending scale of magnitude—was not only his own fault in the ordinary sense; in each case he made sure that punishment would follow. The “faults” it is true were sometimes venial, and the punishments which followed often out of all proportion to them; but not, we may assume, out of proportion to the sense of guilt which was the mainspring not only of the punishment, but also of the “crime” which made it necessary. In Detroit he did not say to an accusing journalist, “I am innocent of your charge; take it to the authorities and I will fight it”; he meekly resigned. At the Ford Republic he did not seek the counsel of those who could have saved him; he adopted an aggressive attitude, resigned, and sentenced himself to hard labour as a navvy. At the Little Commonwealth, though he was innocent of the gravest charges brought against him, he deliberately provoked his accusers. At his trial in 1925 he humbly agreed to the “bargain” that was a tacit admission of the guilt he so strenuously denied. His death? . . . “There was no question of suicide, I suppose?” one friend has asked. Certainly not, in the accepted sense; he undoubtedly died of pneumonia and typhoid fever. But it was an essential part of his philosophy that we suffer only those illnesses of which we have an emotional need. He was nearly fifty. It might well be that in a dreadful moment of clarity he saw the essentially tragic nature of his emotional make-up, and the thought of making yet another fresh start was more than he could bear.

But however tragic his own life may have been, he brought happiness and healing to others beyond measure, and we can perhaps almost be forgiven for believing that what he suffered in the end was the price he had to pay for the liberation of others from fear and pain and misery; the crucifixion that inevitably befalls the redeemer.



ARNOLD TOYNBEE HAS SPOKEN in his *Study of History* of the value to civilisations and to individuals of a period of retirement and withdrawal, the effect of which is often a regenerative one. Such a period—and with such an effect—Lane seems now to have had. The man who came to Buffalo in March, 1912, was a different man from the one who left it about a year later. In that short period, when he was entirely divorced from his own world, he seems to have had a spiritual, or at any rate a mental, stocktaking.

The artist who is a true genius does not work to rules. He creates something of great beauty, and lesser men derive their rules from the study of the work of the master. Lane was in some such way a man of genius. Like the artist's, his work was based rather on the promptings of intuition than on conscious ideas resulting from rational thought. He, like the artist, knew that his work was good. He seems now, during this period of detachment, to have looked at it from the outside, asking himself why it was good—what were the rules to be observed by those who would copy it?

He discovered that, although he had been using a conscious technique that was novel and which few others had used, his work was unique because it was permeated by a spirit which was wholly his. He had vaguely realized, as we saw earlier, that the George Junior Republic, superficially so similar to his own, lacked something which his had. He began to see that, whereas other workers in this field conducted themselves as if they were in a different camp, a different category from those they sought to "save", he himself belonged to the same camp, was one of them. How far recent events contributed to this revelation we cannot guess; but certainly now he began to realise that he was, as he was to put it later, "on their side". If he had been asked to explain this he might have said that he was on their side because he recognised their anti-social behaviour as an expression of "positive virtues wrongly expressed"; that their very misdeeds were something to be admired and respected as evidence of these "positive virtues". He may not have realised that there was more in it than that; that he found it easy to identify himself with the boys in his care because he was himself constitutionally a rebel; that he himself was unstable and insecure, and therefore readily able to understand and sympathise with those in a similar predicament.

It is extremely difficult to discover how much self-knowledge he had, but certainly during this obscure and somewhat baffling period of retirement from his world, he discovered something of revolutionary importance about what he had been doing, as distinct from what he was.

*"Whether at once, as once at a crash, Paul,
Or as Austin, a lingering-out sweet skill."*

whether the result of reading, or merely of introspection we have no certain means of telling. But it does seem likely that reading may have helped. He was known, while still at the Ford Republic, to have read something of Madame Montessori; it was not until he came to England that he was talking about Pestalozzi, and it seems very probable, therefore, that he may have read—or heard—about him during this period. Madame Montessori's writings had a certain interest for him because of their novelty, but it seems unlikely that the relatively cold, scientific, academic personality of the Italian woman can have appealed to him as much as the poor, warm-hearted Swiss. If he read Pestalozzi's own account of his work at Stanz he cannot have failed to be impressed by the similarity in the atmosphere and physical conditions between Stanz and the beginnings of the Ford Republic. There was the same group of unruly children with a tiny staff and grossly inadequate buildings. There was the same family atmosphere and the same attempt at regeneration through industry. He may have recognised too, perhaps somewhat ruefully, the same financial ineptitude. He must have read it with growing excitement and the most intense sympathy . . .

"I laughed and cried with them. They were out of the world, they were out of Stanz, they lived entirely with me and I with them. When they were ill I nursed them. I slept in their midst. I was the last to go to bed at night and the first to get up in the morning." "The very bases of an organised plan were wanting and were only to be found in the

children themselves, and it was better so. Had I started with the discipline of rules, the severity of external order would not have accomplished my purpose." "Such a discipline as there was grew up step by step out of our needs. I saw an inner power awake in the children, the universality of which far exceeded my expectations, and the particular expression of which both astonished and touched me."

Lane could not have read these words (which I quote from the admirable translation of J. A. Green) without being thrilled to the core. And what principle lay at the foundation of Pestalozzi's work? He tells us himself, and we can imagine Lane almost shouting aloud at the revelation, "I knew no order, no method, which did not rest upon the children's conviction of my love for them. I did not care to know any other."

All this may seem a little fanciful. We do not *know* that Lane read Pestalozzi while he was in Buffalo. But read him he certainly did, and very probably at this time, and it does seem very likely that this was how he came to realise fully, for the first time, exactly what it was he had been doing. But from whatever source, there came to him at Buffalo a new light which illuminated all he had done before and which was to be the generative principle in all he was to do in the future.

He knew he had been doing something unique. Now he knew what it was. He had been using the reforming and regenerating influence of love, where most people use the stunting and corrupting influence of hatred, condemnation and punishment.

Henceforward this was to be at the core of his work and the centre of his teaching. The self-determination which he had hitherto preached was now seen to be merely a corollary of this startling fact; that those who would help the delinquent and anti-social and unhappy must "be on their side"—must love them.

This principle he was henceforward to apply with undeviating steadfastness, but rarely with discretion and never, it is to be feared, with any real understanding of the inflammable nature of the forces released by this method.



I HAVE SAID THAT THE REGIME AT THE LITTLE COMMONWEALTH was milder and more lenient than at Ford, and that this may have been due in part to Lane's reading of Pestalozzi and his period of retirement at Buffalo. In fact, he seems to have developed a different conception of what the nature of the place should be. The Ford Republic he thought of primarily as an institution, but in his open-hearted and wide-armed way he incorporated the whole place into his own family. At the Little Commonwealth his own family was lost in the larger community. "It was several days", said one visitor, "before I was able to identify the Lane children". Daddy—as he had come to be—slept in one cottage. Mabel in another. (Heather, with "her" babies), and the children—when they were not away at school—wherever room could be found for them—all sharing, of course, the common life of the Institution. (Mabel,

once again, appears as a rather dim background figure, sometimes perhaps wondering what it was all about, but staunchly supporting her man and cheerfully working her fingers to the bone, not, one feels, for the sake of the citizens—though she was interested in them—but for him.) On the other hand, he now no longer regarded the community as an institution; he regarded it as a family. It is questionable how far he did this consciously. He did not often refer to it as a family; in fact, it was several families, and it was as several families that he thought of it consciously. Nevertheless, the relationship which he encouraged—the *Affective* relationship—was rather that of members of the same family than that of fellow citizens. There was not only the underlying affection for one another, there was also the familiarity—in the real and literal sense of the word—and there was the mutual criticism and forthrightness that is to be found in a healthy family. Mutual affection between members of a family does not consist only of tender feelings and kind words. There is a kind of roughness which the presence of the underlying affection—and the assumption of its presence—makes possible; and all this was present at the Commonwealth. Much more perhaps than is commonly realised, this was where Lane began to influence education in this country. The very progressive schools nowadays are noted among their critics (or they were in their early days) for the uncouthness and rudeness of their pupils and staff. Perhaps some of them go to extremes. But the roughness and familiarity between all concerned—adult and juvenile—that is to be found in many modern boarding schools, has its origin here. Whether avowed or not, it is the family feeling, and Lane initiated it. Although to the stranger some of its manifestations may seem unpleasant, its background is mutual affection and mutual respect, and humility on the part of the adults. Because the adult does not think of himself as essentially a superior being, he does not say “I forbid you to do such and such a thing”; he says rather, “Don’t be a silly ass” (or even, indeed, “a bloody fool”); “if you do that it will have such and such consequences, and you’ll wish you’d never done it”. The effect of this approach is to induce neither unwilling obedience nor rebelliousness, but rather an acceptance of the facts and an acting upon them. Even if the facts are not accepted and acted upon, there is not in these circumstances the further crime—and punishment—of disobedience in addition to whatever consequences may have flowed from the ill-advised action; and confidence in the adult is maintained or even enhanced. In most schools nowadays, and especially in boarding schools, there is a much more free and relaxed atmosphere than perhaps there has even been. While this is due in part, of course, to the general loosening of relationships in this country, it is also due in large part to Lane’s pioneer work at the Little Commonwealth. Particularly is this true in the case of special schools for delinquent, difficult and maladjusted children. Approved Schools have been slow to accept Lane’s example, and in view of his later relationship with the Home Office, this is not surprising. But in the new schools for maladjusted children established during the last twenty years or so, free of the disciplinarian traditions of the Home Office Schools, Lane’s influence is clearly to be seen. In some

cases the debt to Lane is recognised and acknowledged; in some it is present, as it were, at secondhand. But no one who knows the best of these schools can fail to see Lane’s influence in them.

Lane’s greatest gifts, it cannot too much be emphasised, were his quick intuitive understanding of what was going on in another person’s mind, and his capacity to arouse in others warm feelings of admiration and affection. His old friend and patron, Dr. Claude Jones, attributed this latter gift to the fact that all the things his boys enjoyed doing, Lane could do better. But as he proved equally attractive to educated, cultured and sophisticated adults, there was evidently more in it than that. Most of his success was due to these twin gifts, and they contributed largely to his downfall, the unorthodox, and indeed sometimes bizarre methods he employed upon occasion arose from them, and much harm has been done by people without these gifts trying to give universal application to techniques which had only a particular application. They are none the less interesting and amusing. Lord Sandwich tells the story of the boys who were helping Lane to build a brick wall. Lane himself was doing the most difficult part, at the corner. The boys soon became discouraged, saying that they would never be able to lay a straight course. Lane then surreptitiously spoilt his own work and presently brought the boys to see how badly he was getting on. When they saw that even his work was not perfect, they felt that perhaps they need not give up after all, and in time became quite competent bricklayers. In the same vein is the story told in Lane’s words about the boy who had been sent to him by the teacher because he could not do his arithmetic. Lane put on his most formal and forbidding manner, blustered at the boy about what a fool he must be to be unable to do such a simple sum, and started doing it himself, aloud. In the process he made such stupid errors that even the boy could see them, and eventually Lane, having apparently got himself into an inextricable mess, used some obvious excuse to leave the room—and the problem—which the boy then solved.

Recollecting Homer Lane

A. S. NEILL

I HAD WRITTEN TWO BOOKS BEFORE I EVER HEARD OF LANE, and three before I met him at the Little Commonwealth. I had been groping and Lane introduced me to child psychology. The idea was that I should join his staff when free from the army, but by the time I was discharged the Commonwealth had been closed. However, when I went to teach at King Alfred School in Hampstead, Lane had set up as a psychoanalyst and sent two of his children to K.A.S. For almost two years I dined at his house every Sunday night.

No need to go over the facts that appear in *Talk to Parents and Teachers* and *The Little Commonwealth*. That is old history. I'll take the personal angle. Most neurotics choose for themselves when they go to be analysed, but my analysis by Lane happened otherwise. "Neill, you can't be a good teacher unless you are analysed. I'll analyse you." Of course I soon found out that I was as neurotic as the next one. I thought and still think that Lane was a bad analyst. He was brilliant in symbolism, and his interpretation of my dreams was like a fascinating play, but he reached my head only, never my guts as it were. I had the same experience later when I went to Stekel in Vienna, indeed I did not get any real emotional abreaction until years later when I went through Reich's Vegeto-therapy.

Lane had a remendous power over his patients and disciples. He had only to say: "Every woodworker has a mother complex," and we sat at his feet and believed him. Old Homer must have chuckled inwardly at our naive faith and worship. I think he exploited us, pulled our legs, for he told us yarns about his youth which, according to David Wills' investigations in America, never took place. He told us he had run away as a boy and lived with the Indians. Apparently

A. S. NEILL, who kindly sent us these recollections of Homer Lane, is headmaster of Summerhill School. His example, and his seventeen books (including "That Dreadful School", "The Free Child" and "Summerhill") have had a widespread and liberating influence on schools everywhere. His article "Summerhill vs. Standard Education" appeared in ANARCHY 11.

that was an invention. It made no difference to us; it makes none now. We loved Lane, his humour, his smile, his tolerance, his charity, yet he was not always tolerant. I recall one Sunday night when I found Flossie, one of his Commonwealth girls who lived with them, crying on the front steps. She sobbed: "Daddy won't let me go out with Bill." Bill was the postman. I tried to ask him why and he scowled and said nothing. Often he would sit the whole night looking worried and unhappy. In his consulting room, however, he was always cheerful.

Lane's tragedy was that he left youth and took on adults for analysis. He never grew up emotionally, a proof of this being that his downfall was in part due to the fact that he accepted a gift of a car from a woman patient. His realm was the Commonwealth, the most exciting and brilliant piece of delinquency reform known at the time and still far ahead of his and our time. A few good men have followed his example and set up schools and homes for dealing with problem children with psychology, approval and love, but I have not seen evidence that the Home Office has learned anything from his work. I hope I am wrong here. Lane's great phrase . . . being on the side of the child . . . should be the basis of all work with delinquent children, yes, and grown up ones too. I think, however, that Lane made things too easy, too simple. That case of Jabez who wanted to smash crockery and with Lane's approval went on smashing cups and saucers long after he felt he had enough. Lane claimed that incident had brought one shattering experience that made the boy's authority complexes come tumbling out, curing him. Long experience has convinced me that a dramatic cure does not exist; the incident was only the beginning of the cure, just as my rewarding a boy for stealing was. Curing takes a long time, often a very long time. Poor Jabez died in France and I never knew him, but Lane said he had become a fine citizen.

Lane was born in New England and he never quite lost what can be called his puritanism. At his study circles we used to heckle him. Why was he against a sex life for adolescents? (A question long before Reich made it a burning one, and, by the way I had wonderful luck in knowing two really great men, Lane and Reich.) I forget what reasons Lane gave for not approving of adolescent love, but I am sure they were not the ones we thought rational—fear of pregnancy, fear of the Home Office and the law. And his attitude to religion was vague to us. He talked of God and Christ but did not seem to believe in original sin.

He had that uncommon ability, the ability to laugh at himself. Analysing one of my dreams he said something like this: "The word lime, the stuff for holding stones together. You are a split personality, Neill. Lime is me; I am the cement you want to piece you together. Lime almost, not quite, rhyming with Lane."

"But, Lane, I didn't dream about lime. I dreamt about line, a railway line!"

He roared with laughter.

I want to boast a little here. Never have I failed to acknowledge my debt to Lane. The self government of the Commonwealth was the foundation of my Summerhill self-government. I have had staff and visitors who later set up self-government in homes and schools but I can recall only one who confessed to getting the inspiration from the Commonwealth via Summerhill. Lane himself was too big a man to claim a success that came from others. Note that I am subtly calling myself a big man too.

I have often wondered what Lane would have thought of Summerhill. He died in 1925, six years before I founded my school. I think he would have disapproved of much of my work. I think that his personality had a stronger influence on the Commonwealth than mine has on my school. He was called Daddy, but I pride myself on not being a father symbol, perhaps wrongly, yet I can recall only one occasion on which an old pupil came to me for advice. I do not think that he consciously played for a transference situation as Aichhorn did in his school for problems in Vienna, yet I think he got much transference. Definition of transference: the attaching of infantile emotions to the analyst as a father or a mother Ersatz. Mind you I still feel that Lane was a greater man than I was and am, and that isn't mock modesty. He was braver in his approach to erring youth; he had an intuition that startled one. In one way I was and am probably better . . . I can suffer fools more gladly than old Homer could. I end with an anecdote. When he came to lecture at King Alfred School a woman asked: "What would you do with a boy who hammers nails into a grand piano?"

Lane smiled and went into a long explanation of the psychology of such a boy.

"But, Mr. Lane, you haven't answered my question."

Another long and extended analysis of the boy.

"But, Mr. Lane, you haven't answered my question. What would you do?"

Lane gave his beautiful smile.

"Kick his bottom and chuck him out," he said with some impatience.

I often wish I had Lane's talent for evading direct questions.

The Little Commonwealth in time

ANTHONY WEAVER

THE EXPLANATION USUALLY GIVEN FOR HOMER LANE'S SUCCESS is that he was on the side of his children. This same attitude can be described as a cure by love, by which Ian Suttie chose to explain the working of psychoanalysis; or as charity, as is done by those of Quaker belief.

1. It merges into the life of a community in which a formal structure of *shared responsibility* is maintained. The best current example, to my knowledge, of a therapeutically planned environment is Otto Shaw's school, Red Hill, near Maidstone, where the staff act as stage managers in the drama of self-government by highly intelligent maladjusted boys.

On the other hand, one afternoon this month, in the children's ward of a mental hospital, I found a boy in a single cell, on a mattress without a bed, his clothes taken from him. Why? Because he had played around with a gardener's wheelbarrow on his way to the school unit within the hospital grounds that morning. The treatment had been stipulated, over the head of the teachers, by the doctor in charge who, typically, had no understanding of the meaning of shared responsibility, nor presumably of child development either. He regarded education as something a child receives: as a table may receive a coat of paint. Ordinary medical training appears to be excessively punitive these days.

2. An important feature of the Little Commonwealth was a recognition of the *therapy of work*—carried out on the farm on which the citizens depended for their livelihood, and in the running of the house and cottages. In this respect Reddie of Abbotsholme (1889) had been a forerunner although he had considerably greater influence outside this country than within it. Bedales under Badley, the *Landerziehungsheime Schule* in Germany under Hermann Lietz and, indirectly, Salem and Gordonstoun were conspicuous offspring in the form of progressive

ANTHONY WEAVER is at present working at Oxford on a survey of the treatment of maladjusted pupils in the educational system. Before becoming senior lecturer in education at Whitelands College, he taught in a variety of schools, was head teacher at a school for maladjusted children and warden of a residential clinic. He is the author of "They Steal for Love" and of "War Outmoded", and has contributed to several issues of ANARCHY.

schools for middle class children. Makarenko from Poland had known the work of Lietz, and his collaborator Wyneken, before starting in the new Soviet Union, the Gorki Colony, whose survival depended directly upon the labour of its members. A generation later Henrietta Szold, the inspirer of Youth Aliyah, whose immigrants came mainly from Germany and Poland, was echoing Lane, when she declared two basic principles of the children's villages to be the self-reliance of the adolescent group and the habit of manual work.

3. The Israeli's third principle was the need for study and in their emphasis on this they may be said to have extended the practice of the Little Commonwealth. It may also be said that in work with maladjusted children in the last twenty years *remedial teaching* in the 3Rs, greatly stimulated by the researches of Schonell, Kellmer Pringle and Gulliford at the Birmingham Centre, has gained a place in treatment never envisaged by Homer Lane.

4. The application of learning theories begun by Binet and his collaborators in France and by Burt in Britain, before the first world war, and greatly extended by the American schools since, have taken place alongside those of the dynamic psychologists—Aichhorn, Jung and Melanie Klein.

As a result child *psychotherapy* in Britain has become available, since the establishment of the Health Service of 1948, on a scale and in a manner undreamed of by Lane, or by Makarenko.

5. Undoubtedly the successors of Bedales in the progressive school movement of the 1920s and 1930s owed much to Freud's work on the unconscious in their use of painting and drama as a means of expression of symptoms for interpretation. But the function of *creative work* in these media, as well as through dance and craft, has since been more clearly regarded as a means of assertion of an individual's identity and integrity, and in itself as a main objective of education.

This, I suspect, was hardly appreciated by Lane, and it is certainly not appreciated by the general run of psychiatrists and school medical officers now.

The accompanying table gives a rough indication of the chief ingredients of treatment practised in a variety of establishments.

To sum up, we may see that Lane's achievement was limited by the absence of remedial teaching, of psychotherapy and of an understanding of the place of art in education. But we also see that the Special Schools which are increasingly coming under the control of the Health Service and the School Psychological Service, tend to be ignorant of Lane's demonstrations of the benefits to be derived from "work" and from self-government.

Establishment	1. Shared Responsi- bility	2. Work (Estate or farm)	3. Remedial Teaching	4. Psycho- therapy	5. Arts and creativity
Little Commonwealth (Lane)	*	*			
Gorki Colony (Makarenko)	*	*			
Youth Aliyah (H. Szold)	*	*	* (study)		
Rudolf Steiner Curative Schools		*			*
"Wayward Youth" (Eichhorn)	*			*	
Summerhill (A. S. Neill)	*				*
Progressive Schools (King Alfred, Kilquhanity, Wennington, Monkton Wyld)	*	*			* (Herbert Read)
Red Hill School (Olio Shaw)	*	*	*	*	*
David Wills	*	* (Hawkspur Experiment)		*	* (Barns Experiment)
Finchden Manor (George Lyward)	*	*		*	*
Local Education Authority Day Schools for Maladjusted Pupils			*	*	
Hospital Schools for Maladjusted Pupils			*	*	

A last word on Homer Lane

With most men, love means being fond of—affection; with Lane it meant being on the side of—approval, championship. Love in this sense, he always maintained, had been destroyed by the moralists, and man's best hope of salvation lay in its recovery. Many people might have been fond of the children who came to the Little Commonwealth, although they disapproved of their conduct; might, in fact, have claimed to love them, in spite of such disapproval. These people could never have effected the kind of cure which Lane produced in every case. Lane alone loved the children, not in spite of their crimes, but because of their crimes; nay, could even love, in his sense, the very crimes themselves, and thus he had no difficulty in curing them. What he did others could do equally, but always and only on condition that their love contained no element of pity, was genuinely synonymous with admiration, and took the form of sympathy with and championship of the very qualities of which society most strongly disapproved. It was this quality in Lane which most puzzled even those who knew him intimately, and probably my attempt to interpret it will be found equally puzzling. The idea of loving evil qualities, of championing evil-doers, of being on the side of law-breakers, is so fundamentally at variance with the morality in which we are all brought up, that it seems at first to be incomprehensible. No one, I hope, will so misunderstand what I have written as to think I have attributed to Mr. Lane approval of the crimes which the young hooligans who were sent to the Little Commonwealth had committed, or a desire to see the latter continue in the career of crime on which they had started. Which I have tried to explain is that he was able to see in those crimes evidence of qualities admirable in themselves and when differently expressed recognizable as the highest virtues; that when he heard the record of the evil the children had committed, instead of pitying them as poor little sinners, he could admire them as stout-hearted little ruffians. It was because of his genuine admiration for their high spirit, and his knowledge of the causes which had directed them into anti-social rather than social activities, that he was able to secure their complete confidence and substitute in their hearts a different set of ideals. This was the secret of his success, but the law on which he acted would lead anyone to similar results.

—LORD LYTTON (1926)

The Homer Lane Society: An experimental venture

ALTHOUGH HOMER LANE WAS ONE OF THE FIRST to explore the possibilities of a therapeutic environment in the treatment of maladjusted children and young people, he left very little in the way of writing or systematic research. His work has, however, inspired many notable experiments, and his ideas have been developed. A. S. Neill and David Wills, among others, have recorded much of their experience, and the principles of their work have received wide publicity and tentative acceptance. But they are still far from being put into general practice to any great extent, nor have they been developed very fully in the light of the considerable increase in our knowledge, particularly over the last ten years.

We have therefore two aims, to advance this work in a practical way, and to provide an opportunity for further research. It is hoped that the Homer Lane Society will enable people working and interested in this field to exchange ideas and experience, through meetings and lectures. The Society will sponsor research and the publication of literature. Its primary objective, however, is to support the Homer Lane Trust in establishing a community for the treatment of emotionally and socially disturbed children.

The trustees will include David Wills, Frank Dawtry (Secretary of the National Association of Probation Officers), John Cross (warden of a Children's Reception Centre), Cynthia Cross and Roy Frye.

A special feature of this community will be the high degree of flexibility in its organisation. In addition to a nucleus of experienced teachers and child care workers employed within the community, the children will have the invaluable benefit of relationships with other adults. These would be people involved in the community socially and financially, but by following their own occupations outside they would maintain vital links with local people and extend the interests and experience of the whole group. If a house can be obtained with large enough grounds, certain adults could be employed on a small holding or similar project. This also opens up possibilities for older children in exceptional circumstances, who need to continue in the group for a time, giving them the opportunity of working alongside other adults for the benefit of the community.

It is not possible in so little space to elaborate very fully but a system of "shared responsibility" will be evolved as a basis of the therapeutic environment. Shared responsibility avoids the necessity of the adult constantly appearing in an authoritarian role; it is the keystone of the "Homer Lane method". Community problems are discussed by the whole group, and the children therefore feel a greater sense of participating and belonging. Rules are made or changed with everyone's consent and because their purpose is understood, are more willingly kept. When the punitive element is avoided, children can be frank about themselves and each other without fear of censure. They are stimulated to look for the causes of their behaviour, and to understand and help one another, feeling that the adults are "on their side".

Once the community is operating children will be selected according to their estimated capacity to integrate with and benefit from the existing group. There will be a maximum of thirty children not younger than nine years old, most of whom should have a good chance of being rehabilitated to family life or a reliable substitute. For this reason, contact with the families during the child's stay, and adequate after-care are considered very important.

The Trust has already about £1,000, covenanted subscriptions of about £500 a year and a nucleus of people who could partially staff the community. Those concerned are prepared to work hard and plough back a proportion of their income in order to see their ideas and aims realised. As the capital outlay will be very high, we would be very pleased to hear from anyone who could make a donation or covenant subscription; or at the appropriate time, when we are securing a property, could offer us a loan at low interest, or better still, interest free. When we acquire a suitable property, we will welcome anyone willing to share in the work of converting it to our requirements. A subscription to the Society will enable members to keep in touch with progress made. Enquiries about any of these should be made to:—

Roy Schama, (Hon. Treasurer, Homer Lane Society),
91 Fitzjohn's Avenue, London, N.W.3

Not quite the right approach

LEILA BERG

TEN NON-COMMANDMENTS—A HUMANIST'S DECALOGUE by
Ronald Fletcher (Pioneer Press 2s. 6d.)

I NEARLY DID MR. FLETCHER AN INJUSTICE. I like people. I specially like people who are against authoritarianism and dogma as Mr. Fletcher is. I go on liking them when they dedicate a pamphlet "warmly and with confidence, to all young people" . . . though I grow uneasy when I turn to the back and find the writer is not 102 but 42. Such a courtly farewell to youth in one not aged, such a benign handing over, is a little alarming.

But with all the goodwill and fellowship in the world, I could not help finding Mr. Fletcher's pamphlet a bit odd. Who had he written it for? And why had he written it? Who was "we" and who was "they", and why did the two keep changing places? And why did he get caught up in invisible eddies and swirl muddily around, zigzagging about, losing the drift? I read it once, then twice, then, still puzzled, seeing that it was a longer version of an article that had originally appeared in *New Society*, I went down to their offices to try to sort it out.

There I discovered it was the last article in a series of six by various people, on the adolescent in present-day society, that appeared last year. This accounted for the apparently undirected arguments, the arms flailing on empty air. The pamphlet dedication is not, after all, benign, even patronising, but defiant. "I don't care what some people say about adolescents! They're my friends! You're my friends! We're friends! . . . aren't we?" I can understand, with sympathy, how this happens.

Mr. Fletcher states in his opening sentence that we do not need any new morality for teenagers. Before the inoffensive pamphlet-reader has any chance to say "But I never said we did", and "What

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do you mean, 'new'?", and "What do you mean 'morality'?" or to get clear whether Mr. Fletcher is speaking to, at, or about teenagers. Mr. Fletcher launches into a series of swipes that are misconceived, ineffectual and irrelevant, and that can only be explained by conceding that they arose in another context out of generous indignation and impatience.

He says—to summarise roughly his argument—that he does not believe in the melodramatic "tough and tender" romanticisers; that young people of today are sensible, want peace and quiet and a house with a garden, get on quite well with their parents; are worried by the bomb, but who is not?; that the world is much better than it used to be; that the possibility of nuclear war is ghastly but unbelievable, and in any case makes no difference to moral issues; that the world is complex and makes us feel helpless, but this has always been so, and is offset by the consideration and care shown for young people; that similarly the gap between parents and children has always existed, and that anyway parents are more sensitive to the problems today; that children have always matured early enough to make sex a problem—the increased wealth of teenagers has altered nothing, except whether they go out on foot, on bicycles or on motor-bikes; and anyway, why are young people criticised when we adults are just as bad?

By this time, one is reeling slightly. Have adolescents then no problems? I think of the two young college people, completely unknown to me, who came all the way from Essex with my name, address and phone number in their hand, because one wanted an abortion. No problem here?

I think of that other girl, who actually had her baby before anyone realised she was pregnant; she wanted so much to keep it, but her parents said they would throw her out if she did; so she had the baby adopted, and now the three of them live together in hate, but respectability. No problem here?

I think of another girl, whose parents, both working, know her situation quite well; and it is pretty messy. They seem quite fond of her in their restricted, respectable way. At any rate they have never kicked her teeth in, as far as I know. But they have never made any offer of financial, or other, help. She borrows from friends. No problems here?

And I think of a boy I know, a young plumber of about nineteen, who has just bought a birthday present for his girl—a frock, a coat, shoes, stockings and a handbag. He told me that last year he bought her a record-player that cost fifty pounds. I thought of his parents who must have been courting during the war—ration books, empty shops, empty pockets. Did his mother call it pride that she felt towards him? Did his father call it trying to get him to spend his money sensibly? Was the present really so uninfluenced by the fantastically different past of a generation ago? Were there really no problems here?

He lived in a small flat with so many adults—including aunts and Gran—and so many children of various ages, that I asked him how he managed. But he said it was all right until his younger brother, who was getting married soon, started to pile up all his new stuff on the bed.

"He must be young to be getting married", I said.

"Oh, he's mad. You wouldn't catch me getting married. I've been engaged for five years, but you won't catch me getting married, not for years yet."

"Why did you get engaged?"

"Huh, it wasn't *my* idea!"

No problems here, Mr. Fletcher?

And our first generation students, unbacked by any family tradition, sharing no common past with their new friends, no common future with their old, surely they must have problems? And surely Mr. Fletcher, a university lecturer, must know them? So isolated, of course they form groups; and in both their isolation and their grouping, they are attacked. This generation will surely go down in history as the time the B.M.A. committee—all adults, of course—was horrified when a boy, asked what he would do when the four minute warning went, said "Sleep with Brenda". Bad, bad boy. You will stand in the corner when the four minute warning goes. But all the same, the boy and Brenda have problems surely *now*, if only because they have to deal with such adults?

And that line about "we adults are just as bad". Having taken the trouble to place it in context, I realise that Mr. Fletcher meant it generously, defiantly; but it comes over with such kind, myopic confusion it shocks me. If I took a three-year old out, and she wet her pants because I hadn't had the sense to organise her day properly, I would know it was my fault, because I was an adult and had the responsibility, and I would be more intelligent next time. Similarly when young people are persuaded and bludgeoned by adults who see a wonderful chance of grabbing some of their money by pandering to their uncertainties and weaknesses and making them last, then I am aware the exploiters are adults. When the young people are denounced by people who have never denounced the exploiters, then I am aware the denouncers are adults. No teenager depends for his livelihood, for his meals, for his car, for his holidays, on the calculated exploitation of someone else's vulnerability. If he did, he would be a "juvenile delinquent", not a businessman, an advertising man, a politician, a bureaucrat, a bishop. Why doesn't Mr. Fletcher mention this, instead of trying to make us one large happy family by saying there are no problems? My mother-in-law, at times of impending argument, used to say "Have a nice cup of tea". She meant well, but I can't say it was helpful.

In the second half of the pamphlet, Mr. Fletcher sets down his Ten Non-Commandments; and here, as in the first half, one is aware that the numerous cuts the *New Society* editor made were more effective

and helpful than Mr. Fletcher perhaps realised, and that it was a pity to restore them. Perhaps it would be stupid to complain that the Non-Commandments are unoriginal; it would be more accurate to say they seem unfelt and unexperienced. Mr. Fletcher says for instance, "To try to achieve the highest qualities of excellence of which you are capable both in what you like doing and in what you are committed to do . . . is as good a basis as any for a satisfying personal life". Could one say this to an unskilled boy or girl working on a conveyor belt, or to an educated one feeding a computer? He goes on "It is the same with leisure. There is much to be said for periods of enjoyable idleness; but not many people are happy with this for long. The problems of leisure . . ." It is all so theoretical. Say this to one of the young unemployed up in the North-East of England—or to those down South, who like a shorter working week because then they can work overtime. The pamphlet just doesn't gell. Life is much more complicated than that.

Besides—thinking of Non-Commandments number one and two—dogma is dogma, whether God or anti-God. And Mr. Fletcher does not alter this fact but rather intensifies it, by starting his first Non-Commandment "Never accept authority", then following it up with so much unnecessary anti-God stuff.

But frankly I find this whole business of focussing on the adolescent as a phenomenon, rather repellant; and I think this is really what Mr. Fletcher is trying to get over. I once kept a nursery school. And once on a Saturday, looking out of my window on to the Common, I saw one of my three-year-olds with his mother, and was knocked backwards to see—for the first time—that he was small. I had never realised it before. People are people. Growing up is not a separation, but a synthesis, or a building up. At forty, we are also thirty, twenty, ten, just being born. The stairs still creak alarmingly in the night: we know, though now we don't hear them. We still are not always sure which is us, and which is the outside world, what are the fingers that we move and what are the streamers tied to our pram handle blown by the wind; but now we can discuss, reason, and delineate, in action, our identity.

I look at a new baby and I see the strange shells of its ears and the waving starfish fingers—like something stranded by the sea on a surrealist shore; and I see the mustering hands frenziedly shepherding words from the working mouth, like an urgent anemone in a pool, but the baby's words are, fittingly, silent. This is any new baby, extraordinary in its ordinariness. I see a three-year-old, possessed by terrifying anger, and I know her screams are screams for help, so I comfort her and strengthen her. I am amazed at the understanding of a child, sometimes so much simpler and sweeter than an adult's. I am enthralled by her limpid dignity, and delighted by her joy. I am moved by the vulnerability, the courage, the humour, trust and capability of adolescents. These are my fellow human beings. Their size is not apparent,

only our reciprocity is. As an adult, all I can offer—and must offer—is experience, skill, and perhaps a love that is not vulnerable.

Nor do I find our self-consciously dispassionate sociologists any less repellant than the passionate denouncers. "Look at their clothes", they cry. "Isn't it *interesting*. They seem to have a *different* uniform this week!" And they write it down in their little notebook. This week the youth club. Next week Mars.

But to shout passionately back "They are my friends. They have no problems" seems to me to be contradictory. My friends all have problems. Only my enemies don't.

In fact, I do not go at all for this "new morality" discussion. I cannot say "Yes, it does exist", or "No, it doesn't". I can only ask "What do you mean?" I have just been down to a tiny Somerset village, and there at a jumble sale in aid of the cricket club I heard a man say "Bloody" not once but twice in the same sentence; and I felt outraged. I would, I believe, have felt it right and proper for my friend's son to knock him down and say "Take that, you cad. There are ladies present". I had been there three days. Then I went back to London and swore amiably as usual. That is morality.

But if by talking of "new morality" people mean "is the ground being cleared, are things moving, are people beginning to look at each other at last?" then I think the answer is yes. For me the symbol of today—and I am romantic enough to enjoy a living symbol—is the hitch-hiker. I sat at a table when a wealthy woman was discoursing on hitch-hikers. "Why don't they get a car of their own?" she said. "Something without working for it! Something for nothing!" And I thought "Someone opened the door of her cage, and she cowered back".

The reciprocity of hitch-hiking, the unpremeditated friendships, the acceptance of risk, the good humour, the giving of what one has and taking, as equal, whatever the other has to give . . . this is the only way life can be lived today. Some people have worked this out, and they are middle-aged. Some know it without thinking, without being aware they know or that it is anything to announce, and they are young. I think perhaps Mr. Fletcher knows it, but I suspect only in theory. I think he needs to be aware of young people, to know them, as well as feel amiable towards them. The denouncers and the exaggerators he can just ignore; life itself will look after them.

Chessman's bequest to his executioners

RICHARD DRINNON

A DOUBLE IRONY LAY IN CARYL CHESSMAN'S CONVICTION in 1948 on seventeen charges of robbery, sexual assault, and kidnapping. The state's assumption that it could twice take away something irreplaceably precious was laughable; as for the man condemned to die two times over, he "didn't much give a damn whether he lived or died." But sometime during the dozen years left him he started giving a very big damn and also became a writer of true promise, if not of the realised achievement claimed by some of his supporters. The two were fairly directly linked. "One sheds one's sickness in books," D. H. Lawrence found, "repeats and presents again one's emotions to be master of them." Chessman's experience was similar, for when he stayed his flood of legal briefs and memoranda to write several autobiographical novels, his first discovery was himself.

A false start showed him that mere hate was "not a very good storyteller," that it would not turn back on itself and help him show how a "psychopathic hate is born." Throwing away what he had on paper, he started over. *Cell 2455* was a triumph of the intellect and emotions. To begin with, it was not simply a tear-jerking apology for his misspent and misunderstood youth. Even in the extremity of his condition, he did not take the easy course marked out by social workers and blame society for all his actions: "Make no mistake," he warned the reader, "I don't blame my plight on you or on society generally. I blame myself and I accept full responsibility for what has happened to me." In truth, he was a little hard on himself, for his notes from

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the underground clearly established that society was in some measure to blame. In an economy based on the fast buck, the Cadillac convertible, and the swank apartment; in a social rat-race run on "Screw you, Jack" rules, with impersonal state agencies to sweep up the losers; in a political order in which almost all was permitted, provided you did not get caught or had police protection—after all, Chessman did not invent this Los Angeles subtopia and it was on this burned-over ground that he grew up and became part of the general estrangement. Certainly, as an adolescent with personal problems, he was hardly guided to creative solutions for his inner tensions. One of the contributions of his book was the conceptual bridge which he erected between the disturbed individual and the alienated society.

More difficult were his excursions into the dark places of his own psyche. Almost unflinchingly he outlined the life story of a child with an invalid mother and a suicidal father and related how he began stealing groceries more for kicks than for food. To teach him a "lesson," the authorities repeatedly put him behind bars, threw him into solitary, slapped him, stood on his arches, and threatened him with the gas chamber if he did not conform to the system. The pedagogy was still lacking something essential, for Chessman simply tramped down on the accelerator in a "wild ride in a hot car through Hollywood, with the cops in hot pursuit and shooting." All this reads like material from a B-movie, but what Chessman did with it reads more like Vienna than Hollywood. The wild ride, he realised, "leads both into darkness and away from darkness"—both away from guilts and fears of death and into the final kick of self-destruction. In his analysis of his relations with his parents, Chessman showed a perceptive awareness that his aggression turned inward had resulted in fear and guilt. Turned outward it had been a kind of therapy which helped him live in his hell. He went on, however, to tie this external aggression to death, for to rely on it meant "you are afraid of nothing because you believe in nothing, have faith in nothing. It means you have found life worthless and death consequently meaningless. It means you have traded fear for guile and hate and an angry, furious contempt, that you have turned against yourself and all that is warm and human . . . Your coveted aloneness lacks only the finality that Death will give it." And if aggression was really death turned outwards, then the state's relentless drive to kill him and others was an expression of a collective death wish. Execution was to be his ultimate punishment for not "learning his lesson." To approach the troubled young this way was farcical and worse: "the idea that someone exercising authority over them . . . can scold, lecture, frighten or force them into being 'good,' which usually means no more than blind, submissive obedience to authority's will, is simply a fallacy. But authority—and society—seems to be infatuated with the idea anyway." Infatuated was not quite the right word, but the insight was there. There is a basic identity between the criminal's aggressive acts and the state's. Its stubborn retention of the death penalty in the face of reason and evidence shows a comparable liking for aggression, except that the state's ways of killing are of course

sanctioned ways.

In his last book, *The Kid Was a Killer*, Chessman further tied individual violence to collective violence. The psychopathic Kid does not take up killing on his own. Instead he takes part in the Korean War and finds a full, legal, socially respectable outlet for his lust to destroy. For his exploits the Kid receives medals; at home he would have earned a seat in the gas chamber. Only an individual psychopath or a psychopathic culture, Chessman was saying, would take up violent aggression to solve conflicts. "In time," he wrote, "we would substitute vision for vengeance. We would rise above our own fears and insecurity and senseless prejudices, and when we did we would build a better world, one whose architect was neither force nor violence, retribution nor suspicion." Given his circumstances and ours, this was an extravagant hope; but he himself provided us with one compelling reason for not thinking it impossibly optimistic.

Writing in the shadow of the gas chamber, Chessman shed his sickness in books, mastered his urges to destroy himself and others, and in so doing learned how to face death and die with dignity. Part of the unspeakable futility of his execution was its timing, for it came at a point when a full life had become possible for him: he had discovered in himself what Dostoevsky found in *The House of the Dead*, "the passionate desire to rise up again, to be renewed, to begin a new life." Yet Chessman did leave us the legacy of his insights into violence and the impact of his experience. He showed a way out of our collective Death Row—no inconsiderable achievement for a writer—and may even have marked out a path to renewal and joy.

Some other issues of special interest

If you found this issue of ANARCHY interesting you may like to know about some other issues which are still available. In ANARCHY 15 several authors discussed the work of David Wills. In ANARCHY 18 teachers, parents and children wrote about Comprehensive Schools and in ANARCHY 21 Secondary Modern Schools were explored, while Martin Daniel discussed the Crowther Report. ANARCHY 11 reviewed the books and ideas of Paul Goodman, A. S. Neill wrote about Summerhill, and Harold Drasdo discussed the limitations of the "character-building" theory of education. (Outward Bound and all that).

In ANARCHY 27, Joe Benjamin and David Downes write of their experiences of the beginning and the end of the Teen Canteen. The same issue has Charles Radcliffe on the public schools, Nicolas Walter on Cliff Richard, Colin MacInnes on Ray Gosling and Paul Goodman on New York street gangs. If your interest in Homer Lane's ideas is primarily criminological, we have had a brilliant series of issues on these topics: ANARCHY 9 on Prison, ANARCHY 32 on Crime, and ANARCHY 36 on Arms of the Law. Perhaps you would do best to get ANARCHY regularly—see inside front cover for subscription rates.